

Case Study: Lean Thinking in Iowa

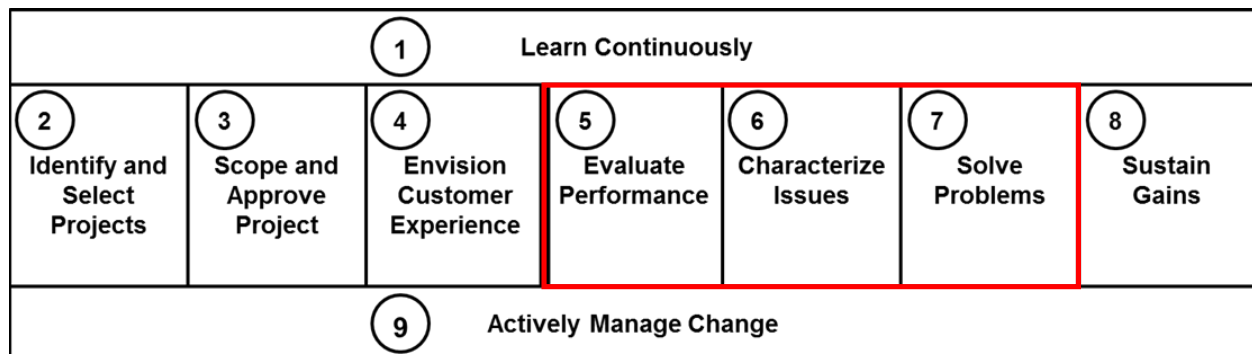
Relevance to the State of Colorado Lean Program

Organizations working to transition to Lean often see their transformational ideas hit roadblocks along the way. This article clearly illustrates the positive impact that can be achieved through the application of Lean principals combined with facilitated Kaizen events. In particular, the combination can enable the development of efficient and effective processes, often solving the most vexing process problems. The article highlights:

- Strategies for continuing to focus on the customer experience even in the face of longstanding internal resistance to change
- Lean tactics, like Kaizen or Rapid Improvement Events (RIE) to quickly change mindsets and instill more ownership in new, transformational roles

Iowa Agencies Highlighted	Relevant Colorado Agencies
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Iowa Veterans Home (IVH)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Colorado Department of Military and Veteran's Affairs (DMVA)• Colorado State Veteran's Home• Colorado Department of Human Services (DHS)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Colorado Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Iowa Department of Corrections (DOC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Colorado Department of Corrections (DOC)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Iowa Department of Management – Iowa Office of Lean Enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Governor's Office of State Planning & Budgeting (OSPB) – Lean Program Management Office

In our State of Colorado Lean Model, this article clearly focuses on Lean techniques used to evaluate performance, characterize issues and solve problems.



Key Outcomes and Learnings from the Article

In the article “[Lean Thinking in Government: The State of Iowa](#)”, David Drickhamer focuses on the Lean strategy and specific tactics to solve challenging problems across Iowa state agencies.

- The Iowa Lean champions leveraged their role within the Iowa Department of Management to achieve their objectives
- They facilitated multi-day collaborative sessions focusing on streamlining and designing a more optimal workflow
- Specific to the Iowa Veteran’s Home, the team methodically analyzed the problems, identified root causes, developed and implemented solutions
 - First, they separated into smaller groups to work out solutions within the parameters established during the scoping discussions prior to the event
 - Second, they documented the agreed-upon process changes with sticky notes and arrows affixed to a mural-sized sheet of paper stretching around the room
 - Third, they eliminated steps that added time and effort but didn’t serve residents’ needs
 - Ultimately, the new process had 31% fewer steps (from 124 to 91), which reduced delays by 69%

Key Information

- ✓ The teams relied largely on Value Stream Mapping to solve complex problems. This is a visual representation of all the actions and decisions required to deliver what customers value. These include actions to process information from the customer and those taken to ensure optimal results from the customer perspective.
- ✓ The teams leveraged numerous Kaizen or Rapid Improvement Events (RIEs) - a group continuous improvement activity, often lasting 3-5 days, in which a cross-functional team develops and institutes significant improvements in a new, standardized process.
- ✓ Most of the initial Kaizen events the state has conducted were facilitated by outside consultants. However, state employees quickly used these opportunities to learn the ropes and emerged as Lean champions, inside their respective agencies.

Armed with this basic information, please read the article and consider drafting your answers to the discussion questions on the following pages. A Lean perspective on these questions is also provided that may help engage your team and/or staff.

Reading Assignment

Read “[Lean Thinking in Government: The State of Iowa](#)” by David Drickhamer, found here:
[http://lean.iowa.gov/files/iowa_lean_final%20\(3\).pdf](http://lean.iowa.gov/files/iowa_lean_final%20(3).pdf)

Discussion Questions

After reading the article, consider jotting down your answers to the following questions. If appropriate, engage your team in a group discussion as well.

Individual Discussion Questions

- What actions can you take now with (or without) your teams to get started down the road toward the efficiencies outlined in the case study?
- How does the current Lean implementation in Colorado state government compare to the progress made in Iowa?
- How well do your day-to-day metrics line up with your strategic goals?
- How will you identify the barriers your staff faces to meeting goals?

Team Discussion Questions:

- Do you see examples of competing metrics and goals causing confusion in your teams?
- How did a Lean approach allow the team to work collaboratively from the start?
- How can we best learn from other organizations that are implementing Lean to improve their operations?

Lean Perspective on Discussion Questions

The following Lean perspectives may be of use to you as you take action.

Individual Discussion Questions and Lean Perspective

Discussion Question	Lean Perspective
What actions can you take now with your teams to get started down the road toward efficiencies outlined in the case study?	<p>Consider engaging your teams to evaluate which of their tasks seem to add no lasting value to meeting their customers' needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• For those tasks that seem to have limited value added, have them ask their internal customer if removing that step or performing it in a new way would meet their requirements.• If you also happen to be one of their internal customers, engage in a two-way dialogue, looking for the win/win.
How does the current Lean implementation in Colorado compare to the progress made in Iowa?	<p>The State of Colorado's approach is similar Iowa's in many ways including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In order to learn more, it is often helpful to learn directly from other organizations that have tackled similar problems and can articulate the lessons learned. Iowa began their effort in 2003 and has almost 10 years of experience with Lean. This case study highlights how Kaizen events collapse the time needed to make dramatic improvements in process and customer perceptions.• Our Governor formed the Lean Program Management Office in the Office of State Planning and Budgeting to champion a Lean government, ensure Lean is a statewide effort and ensure the Lean implementation respects our taxpayers and state employees.
How well do your day-to-day metrics line up with your strategic goals?	<p>Higher level performance metrics and goals tend to measure outcomes. A Lean perspective also takes into consideration process metrics such as cycle time and process yield. As the process is improved, the outcomes should begin to improve as well. Consider working with your team to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify key metrics to gauge process improvement in their daily operations. Select a process and track the actual cycle times and instances of rework needed to complete a critical customer-facing task. An easy way to begin tracking improvement is to use a simple check sheet or control chart with baseline and periodic updates over several months.• Compare progress in process metrics with your departmental goals and the Colorado Lean Program's strategic goal of delivering more efficient, effective and elegant government. Discuss what might need to be adjusted in the process or the collection of key metrics to ensure that they align over the long term.

Discussion Question	Lean Perspective
How will you identify the barriers your staff faces to meeting goals?	<p>Develop a strategy that leverages the strengths you already have on your team to overcome barriers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walk through your workplace to gather ideas from your staff and be available to provide explanation of suggestions and possible next steps. • Create a list of questions to prompt staff to gather information about barriers and spark their thinking about removing obstacles. • Many barriers remain simply because an individual lacks the perspective or authority to eliminate wasteful steps. Look for places in the process where the team or a lead can meet and agree to a change. • If you encounter resistance, reference this powerful quote from our own Governor Hickenlooper: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “We understand that government is not a business. Still, we need to apply best practices from successful companies where they make sense. That is why we initiated the Lean program in almost every state agency, where employee teams are now actively identifying waste and inefficiency to create savings.”

Team Discussion Questions and Lean Perspective

Discussion Question	Lean Perspective
How did a Lean approach allow the team to work collaboratively from the start?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Lean tools Iowa used are easy to learn, and the process was initiated quickly with minimal investment. The Iowa teams truly cared about their customers, and because Lean focuses on value to the customer, individual differences were worked out during the team-based events. • Another critical learning is the action bias of the participants in Iowa—they “just did it.”
Do you see examples of competing metrics and goals driving confusion in the team? Consider asking your team to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align measures and priorities to the strategic goal of more efficient, effective and elegant processes. • Evaluate if any of the metrics conflict or compete with this strategic goal.

Discussion Question	Lean Perspective
How can we best learn from other organizations that are implementing Lean to improve their operations?	<p>Consider interactions your teams have with the private sector or other state agencies that may have (or want) more experience with Lean:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would it be possible to share best practices (in common areas such as hiring contractors, conducting inspections, approving permit requests, etc.) with another state agency that also performs similar functions for the public? • How could your team begin to engage resources in the private sector in a similar way?